



MT. CULMEN CLARION

A Newsletter of Mt. Culmen EC Church

*"What I tell you in the dark, say in the light;
and what you hear whispered, shout from the rooftops!"*

Volume 7 - Issue 5 - May 2024

Spring of Worship, Spark of Hope

– Rev. Jonathan Brown

Pastor

Rev. Jonathan J. Brown
717-205-6532

Lay Delegate

Rebekah Brown

Alternate Lay Delegate

Kenneth Bannon

Board President

Floyd Mast

Board Vice President

Delrea Ream

Board Secretary

Sharon Mast

Church Treasurer

Esther Stauffer

Trustees:

Floyd Mast
Barry Ream
David Rissler
Delrea Ream

Stewards:

Esther Stauffer
Joyce Garber
Kim Sweigart
Debra Brubaker

Members-at-Large:

Sharon Mast



This month, Easter draws to its end. After our Lord rose triumphantly from the dead, *"he presented himself alive"* to his apostles, *"appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God"* (Acts 1:3). This month, we mark the end of those forty days, when we celebrate the Ascension of Christ into heaven – from our realm to God's realm. *"Now I am leaving the world and going to the Father"* (John 16:28). But what does it mean? What does it do? What and why do we celebrate the Ascension?

At the cross, Jesus gave himself as a sacrifice to God for us. Not only was he sacrifice, he was also priest, the one making the offering. The Bible tells us that Jesus came to be *"a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people"* (Hebrews 2:17). And just as a high priest would bring the blood of a sacrifice into the tabernacle or temple, one reason why Jesus had to ascend was to bring his offering into *"the greater and more perfect tent"* of heaven (Hebrews 9:11).

But there's another thing a high priest does, sometimes between slaying the sacrifice and bringing the offering: the high priest *"lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them"* (Leviticus 9:22). And so Luke tells us that *"lifting up his hands, [Jesus] blessed them; and while he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven"* (Luke 24:50-51). What does the Ascension mean? That Jesus is a priest of blessing! In this moment, this act, we know: Jesus is blessing *us*, right now, from heaven.

When the cloud of God's glory hides the rising Jesus from the disciples' sight, what do they do next? How do they react to his ascension? *"They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God"* (Luke 24:52-53). The ascension of Jesus was a wellspring of worship for those who loved him – they were filled with joy by his blessing. Meanwhile, as Jesus appeared in heaven, the angels *"fell down before the Lamb,"* sang a song of praise, and worshipped him as worthy (Revelation 5:5-12). Jesus' Ascension unites heaven and earth in worship!

And that's the beautiful thing here. The universe of worship has the ascension of Jesus as its 'Big Bang,' and that same explosive joy echoes through our churches and lives two thousand years later, accelerating (we hope) in the awesome grace and love of God. The joy of worship – where we through Christ return to God the blessing with which he already blessed us in Christ – is an unspeakable privilege. And the Ascension is worth celebrating because it's the wellspring of all worship in heaven and earth even today.

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Mount Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church

1885 Turkey Hill Road, East Earl, PA 17519

Sunday Morning Worship: 10:00 AM



Please visit us online at
facebook.com/MtCulmenEC

Board Meeting Notes (April 2024)

Last month, the Official Board of Mt. Culmen Evangelical Congregational Church convened its meeting after the worship service on Sunday, April 7, 2024, to conduct the business of the church. In attendance at the meeting were 12 members of our church board: Floyd Mast, Sharon Mast, Del Ream, Barry Ream, Kim Sweigart, Esther Stauffer, Joyce Garber, Dave Rissler, Debra Brubaker, Ken Bannon, Rev. Jonathan Brown, and Rebekah Brown.

Opening with prayer and roll call, the board heard the customary reports.

Of these, the treasurer's report submitted by Esther Stauffer noted:

- March 2024 income of \$7,939.45 (of which \$1,687.45 came from the pancake breakfast)
- March 2024 expenses of \$3,589.09
- a March 31 ending balance of \$10,892.62

The secretary's report was accepted unanimously on the motion of Del Ream, seconded by Esther Stauffer.

The treasurer's report was accepted unanimously on the motion of Del Ream, seconded by Kim Sweigart.

The stewards reported that in the past month, they had labeled the drawers and cabinets in the fellowship hall, which had since been found to be a very helpful addition.

The trustees reported that, in a trustee meeting held last month, they had elected **Del Ream** to fill the unexpired term of Brenna Pammer as trustee. Floyd Mast shared also that the work detail at the church originally planned for March 23 had had to be canceled on account of rain, and another clean-up day would be scheduled once the weather would be reliably better. Floyd said that the trustees would also be checking the church bell tower for the source of a leak. In response to a question about plans for the HVAC project at the fellowship hall, Floyd said that the trustees had a couple of preliminary issues to work through yet prior to bringing a proposal before the board.

Under the heading of old business, the board first heard some updates on recent events and plans. Esther Stauffer observed that the Holy Saturday pancake breakfast and Easter egg hunt event had brought in \$1615.50 for the church this year, which, despite attendance having been visibly lower compared to prior years, was over \$300 more than last year. Pastor Jonathan reported that he had booked the Good News Travelin' Band for our June 9 worship service for the amount authorized by the board at our March meeting.

The greater part of old business concerned the issue brought up at the March meeting about whether our cemetery permits burials to take place when the family of the deceased insists on digging the hole themselves, in an attempt to save money by cutting out the service of professionals. It was found that, although the board had wanted to revisit the issue first after consulting experts, the burial in question had been allowed to proceed on April 4. Floyd observed that he had spoken about it to former church sexton Amos Arment, who had asked whether the family had presented a permit allowing the burial; Floyd did not know, but noted that several other families bringing cremated bodies for burial had also not supplied permits. He also had not found cemetery bylaws in our church records.

Some in the board expressed the view that the church has a responsibility to set a clear policy on the matter, as other church cemeteries have; that the risks of amateur burial are too high; and that, having allowed this practice once, we open ourselves to other families asking why they paid for a professional service if they could've done it themselves.

Floyd observed that he had approached a funeral director and been told that there are no federal or state laws that compel cemeteries to require graves to be professionally opened or closed, but that funeral homes have professional diggers open and close graves due to the need to ensure a stable hole large enough for a vault. In this case, since the burial was of someone who had been cremated, there was no box at all, Floyd said. Pastor Jonathan chimed in with two other points: (1) another reason for professional digging is to reduce the risk to other graves, since if a private party is permitted to dig freely in our cemetery, we risk liability for accidental damage to other nearby graves; (2) even in small burials like with cremains, if their container is not sturdy enough, we risk having the ground sink above the burial over time, creating a further safety hazard.

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(Continued from Page 2, "Board Meeting Notes")

The board members discussed the issues involved, reaching a consensus that the board would need to set policies for our cemetery in this and other matters. Floyd said that he had already made plans to attend a then-upcoming meeting in Willow Street with churches and funeral homes, and that during the two-hour meeting he planned to raise some questions and to bring the answers back to the board at the next meeting. The board members agreed to take up the issue again at the May board meeting, in hopes of reaching some clearer determinations.

Under the heading of new business, Rebekah Brown observed that the board had yet to schedule a fellowship meal for the second quarter of 2024. Esther Stauffer suggested May 19, Pentecost Sunday, with which Pastor Jonathan agreed. On motion of Esther Stauffer, as seconded by Rebekah Brown, the board unanimously agreed. The Sunday before that being Mother's Day, Esther said also that she would take care of getting flowers.

At this point in the meeting, Esther left to attend a Weiler family get-together, and those who remained behind held a discussion of the planned June 8 yard sale and soup sale. Rebekah distributed sample advertisements for the event, which the board approved by consensus. Rebekah observed that, since Pastor Jonathan would be out of state at the time, there would be no pastor's special soup sold; she also inquired whether the prices seemed fair. Pending Esther's input, the board agreed that they would be. Rebekah said that she would print copies of the ad (*see page 5*), create an advertisement on Facebook, and work on getting signs made.

There being no further business after that, on motion of Barry Ream, as seconded by Dave Rissler, the board adjourned its meeting, to reconvene following the worship service on **Sunday, May 5, 2024.**

Statistical Report (March 2024)

	<u>Worship Service Attendance</u>	<u>Offerings Received</u>
03/03/24	23	\$807.00
03/10/24	23	\$395.00
03/17/24	28	\$1,595.00
03/24/24	26	\$1,940.00
<u>03/31/24</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>\$1,015.00</u>
Average:	25 (25.2)	Total: \$5,752.00

<u>Birthdays (May 2024)</u>	<u>Anniversaries (May 2024)</u>
5/13 – Tory Lingg	5/4 – Rev. Jonathan and Rebekah Brown
5/17 – Sharon Mast	5/15 – Barry and Del Ream
5/20 – Deb Messner	
5/15 – Amos Arment	
5/19 – J.J. Eberly	

(Continued from Page 1, "Spring of Worship, Spark of Hope")

When Jesus ascended, he left us with his priestly blessing, and he gave rise to worship in heaven above and on earth below. As he makes his priestly parade on high, his triumphal entry, *"lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in!"* (Psalm 24:7). The gates of heaven opened wide, and *"he entered once for all into the holy places"* (Hebrews 9:12), *"into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf"* (Hebrews 9:24). But the gates of heaven did not close behind Jesus. *"Its gates will never be shut by day, and there will be no night there"* (Revelation 21:25).

Jesus ascended into heaven so that, in his words, *"where I am, you may be also"* (John 14:3). Now already, *"your life is hidden with Christ in God"* (Colossians 3:3), and Jesus prayed that the believers entrusted to him *"may be with me where I am, to see my glory"* (John 17:24). That is what Jesus' Ascension means, and why we celebrate it so joyfully. Jesus ascended to heaven to be our anchor behind the curtain, to be the spark of our heavenly hope. *"Soar we now where Christ has led, / following our exalted Head!"* So let's not overlook to celebrate the Ascension!

Upcoming Church Events

- **Clean-up Day** – On Saturday, **May 18**, 2024, we'll be gathering at the church for one of our regular clean-up work sessions. Could you help us?
- **Fellowship Meal** – On Pentecost Sunday, **May 19**, 2024, after our worship service, everyone is invited to the Fellowship Hall for our second-quarter potluck fellowship meal! If you can bring food to share, please do; and if all you can do is bring an appetite, please do that – we always have more than enough food to go around! So in either case, please join us for time spent together in the Spirit of the Lord.
- **National Conference** – From Wednesday, **May 22**, to Friday, **May 24**, 2024, the National Conference of the Evangelical Congregational Church will meet at Messiah University in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Pastor Jonathan will be in attendance, as will Rebekah Brown as our lay delegate. This year's theme is “Changing the World with Jesus,” inspired by Matthew 28:18-20. Please pray for National Conference!

Upcoming Community Events

- **National Day of Prayer** – Thursday, **May 2**, 2024, will be the National Day of Prayer. There will be a local flagpole service at Cedar Grove Presbyterian Church (4833 Division Highway, East Earl) at 10:00am, with inspiration from 2 Samuel 22:29-31. Bring a lawn chair!
- **Spring Tea in the Mansion** – On Sunday, **May 5**, 2024, Historic Poole Forge (1948 Main Street, Narvon) will host a tea at 3:00pm in their mansion, which will be open 2:30pm to 5:00pm. There will be a limited fee and limited reservations; call 484-797-5302.
- **Concerts** – Also on Sunday, **May 5**, 2024, at 7:00pm, the Garden Spot Village Chapel (433 South Kinzer Avenue, New Holland) will host a vocal concert by The Grateful Voices, an 8-person men's ensemble who will sing *a cappella* gospel music.
- **Latino Experience in New Holland** – On Wednesday, **May 8**, 2024, at 7:00pm, Garden Spot Village Chapel will feature a series of four stories focusing on Latino life in Lancaster County, starting with the experiences of Latino workers at the Tyson (then Weaver) plant in New Holland.
- **Spa Day** – On Saturday, **May 11**, 2024, 10:00am through 2:00pm, in the banquet hall of the New Holland American Legion (35 South Hoover Avenue, New Holland), the auxiliary will host a spa day, with vendors providing six spa services. For \$20/ticket, choose some or all of the services. The event proceeds benefit The Fallen Outdoors Team Pennsylvania. To purchase a ticket or for more info, call 717-286-8358.
- **The Scribbler** – On Thursday, **May 16**, 2024, at 7:00pm at Garden Spot Village Chapel, Jack Brubaker, who writes “The Scribbler” column in the newspaper, will talk about local heritage as well as his life and work.
- **Concert** – On Friday, **May 17**, 2024, at 2:00pm, and on Saturday, **May 18**, 2024, at 7:00pm, both in Garden Spot Village Chapel, GSV's community choir, the Village Voices, will give their spring vocal concert, with themes of hope and peace.
- **Yard Sale and Sub Sale** – On Saturday, **May 18**, 2024, Bowmansville Memorial Park (155 Church Street, Narvon) will host a yard sale and sub sale to benefit Bowmansville Fire Company. The event will run from 7:00am through noon. Yard sale 20'x20' spaces are available for \$20/space, with tables for rent for \$5/each; contact Zach High at 610-488-2882 by May 15. The fire company will serve food throughout the event.
- **Community Meal** – On Monday, **May 20**, 2024, 5:30pm to 6:30pm, CrossNet Ministries will provide a free community meal at their youth center (110 West Franklin Street, New Holland).
- **Memorial Day** – On Monday, **May 27**, 2024, Churchtown's observance of Memorial Day will feature the local ladies' auxiliary serving food starting at 4:00pm, a concert including New Holland Band at 6:15pm, and then a parade starting at 7:00pm returning via local cemeteries to Churchtown United Methodist Church and the veterans' monument. At the ceremony at the monument, Pastor Jonathan will offer this year's invocation and benediction, while his friend Rev. Tanner Cosgrave of California EC Church will deliver the message.
- **Breakfast and Yard Sales in the Park** – On Saturday, **June 1**, 2024, starting at 7:00am, the Terre Hill Park (210 Lancaster Avenue, Terre Hill) will be the scene of breakfast in the main pavilion (sandwiches, casserole, baked oatmeal, fresh fruit, etc.) and yard sales lining the park driveway. Sale spaces are available for \$5, with no registration or reservation, and set-up and space assignment begin at 6:00am. This is just one week before our own church yard sale (*on which, see next page*).

Yard Sale, Craft Fair & Soup Sale

When:

**Saturday, June 8, 2024
8am - 1pm**

Where:

**Mt. Culmen EC Church
1885 Turkey Hill Road
East Earl, PA**



Food items sold out of fellowship hall

Cold soups to take home, including:

- Chicken Corn Noodle
- Ham and Bean
- Chili
- Hamburger Vegetable

Pints: \$4

Quarts: \$8

Other items for sale:

- Baked Goods
- Ham & Cheese Sandwiches
- Hot Dogs & Chips

Food sales by cash or card (credit/debit)

Yard sales by cash only

Spaces for rent:

- \$10 space in our fellowship hall
 - Table is provided
- \$5 space in pavilion or on lawn
 - Bring your own table; or, rent one for an additional \$5

Tables and spaces are limited, so call

Yvonne Styer to reserve your space today!

(717) 413-8342

We hope to see you there!

Preaching Calendar (May – June 2024)

Worship services commence at 10:00 AM on Sundays. We hope to see you there with us!

- May 5 (Easter 6):** Sermon Title: “The Downward Spiral”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 4:16-24
“O for a Heart to Praise My God” (351)
“Who Is On the Lord's Side?” (449)
- May 12 (Easter 7 / Ascension):** Pastor Jonathan will be on vacation May 9-15.
Rev. Keith Miller, our District Field Director, will bring the message.
“Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise” (163)
“Now Thank We All Our God” (544)
- May 19 (Pentecost):** Sermon Title: “Rejoicing Where the Flames Burn”
Scripture Reading: Deuteronomy 16:9-12, 16-17 + 1 Peter 1:3-12
“O Spread the Tidings 'Round” (181)
“Come, Holy Ghost, Our Souls Inspire” (180)
- May 26 (Pentecost 1 / Trinity):** Sermon Title: “Gifts of the Godless”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 4:16-22
“Glory Be to God the Father” (197)
“God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens” (44)
- June 2 (Pentecost 2):** Sermon Title: “Appointment and Calling”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 4:1-2, 8, 25-26
“All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name” (53)
“How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds” (57)
- June 9 (Pentecost 3):** Pastor Jonathan will be away for a spiritual renewal week June 5-12,
including attendance at a theology conference in Minnesota.
Instead of our usual service, we're planning something special:
Bring your lawn chairs for a time of outdoor worship in the pavilion
with music and testimonies by the Good News Travelin' Band!
- June 16 (Pentecost 4):** Sermon Title: “And He Died”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 5:1-20
“If I Must Die” (insert)
“Abide with Me; Fast Falls the Eventide” (531)
- June 23 (Pentecost 5):** Sermon Title: “The One God Took”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 6:1-4; 5:15-24
“Just a Closer Walk with Thee” (356)
“Enoch, the Seventh, Walked with God” (insert)
- June 30 (Pentecost 6):** Sermon Title: “A Cry for Relief”
Scripture Reading: Genesis 5:25-32
“All Ye Who Seek for Sure Relief” (insert)
“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (34)
- July 7 (Pentecost 7):**
(Holy Communion) Sermon Title: “Wars, Tears, and the Altar of God”
Scripture Reading: Judges 20:1-7, 23-26, 35; 21:2-4
“O Cross, That Only Know'st the Woes” (insert)
“Great Ruler of the Earth and Skies” (insert)

Quotes for Thought

“As the wind moves through the harp and the strings speak, so the Spirit of the Lord speaks through my members ... Our spirits praise his Holy Spirit. For there went forth a stream, and it became a river great and broad; indeed, it carried away everything, and it shattered and brought it to the Temple. And the restraints of men were not able to restrain it ... For it spread over the face of all the earth, and it filled everything. Then all the thirsty upon the earth drank, and thirst was relieved and quenched; for from the Most High the drink was given. Blessed, therefore, are the ministers of that drink, who have been entrusted with his water.”

– a very early Christian hymn

Odes of Solomon 6.1-2, 7-13 (c. AD 100), in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 2:738-739

“The man who is truly spiritual... will always recognize the same Spirit of God, even though in the last times he is poured out on us in a new manner, but on the entire human race from the creation until the end. From him, those who believe in God and follow his Word receive salvation that comes from him. Those, however, who separate from him and hold his precepts in contempt and by their deeds dishonor him who made them and by their doctrines blaspheme him who nourished them, heap up against themselves a most just judgment.”

– St. Irenaeus of Lyons

Against Heresies 4.33.15 (c. AD 189), in *Ancient Christian Writers* 72:96

“Through the Holy Spirit comes the restoration to paradise, the ascent to the kingdom of heaven, the return to adopted sonship, the freedom to call God our Father and to become a companion of the grace of Christ, to be called a child of light, to participate in eternal glory, and, generally, to have all fullness of blessing in this age and the age to come. We see as in a mirror the grace, as already present, of the goods laid up in store for us in promises, and we enjoy these goods through faith. For if such is the pledge, how great will the fullness be?”

– St. Basil of Caesarea

On the Holy Spirit 15 §36 (c. AD 373), in *Popular Patristics Series* 42:68

“The Son of the King ascended to his Father in order to send the armor of the Spirit from his Father to his servants. Before his ascension, while being elevated, he gathered them and breathed upon them so that they might receive the Spirit from him; and again when he was going, he assured them that he would send the Holy Spirit who would teach them the truths. ... Fire was kindled as in lamps of choice gold, and the peoples were enkindled and enlightened by their rays. And the teaching gushed out like floods in all tongues, and as lilies churches sprang up from the great watering. Twelve streams were distributed from the Upper Room, and they made the earth an Eden of spiritual trees.”

– St. Jacob of Serugh

Homily 58.135-140, 367-372 (c. AD 520), in *Texts from Christian Late Antiquity* 16:18, 40

“The Holy Spirit is life, insofar as he is the principle of movement of all things. ... Great is the Holy Spirit, therefore, by whom all things that exist are moved and live. ... Furthermore, he bestows the spiritual life on the ones whom he sanctifies. ... He leads us back to the hidden origin, that we may be united with God.”

– St. Thomas Aquinas

Academic Sermon 11.1 (c. AD 1250s/1260s), in *Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation* 11:142, 144

“The love that comes from the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of unity while preserving diversity. ... Attention to the purity of doctrine, uniformity of teaching, and encouragement of obedience for the advancement of the kingdom of God have always borne fruit in the form of spiritual renewal. Love for God, the Church, and people always enables the Holy Spirit to work effectively in people and to invigorate ecclesial structures. The Church is a living organism made up of living persons united in love with their Head. Love for the Holy Spirit should precede love for people so that the Holy Spirit can shape it. ... The source and basis of the unity of the faithful is the same Spirit residing in Christ and Christians. ... We can therefore speak of the Church as a continuation of the anointing and an extension of Pentecost.”

– Marek Jagodziński

The Holy Spirit of Communion: A Study in Pneumatology and Ecclesiology (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2023), 274-275

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We praise God* for all the wondrous blessings he's given us, most notably the ministry of his Son (in death, resurrection, and exaltation to the Father's right hand) and the gift of his Holy Spirit; and *we pray* that God would glorify his name above all else and would bring his kingdom more fully to earth.
- *We pray for our denomination, our congregation, and the church universal*, that God would bless us at all levels with faithfulness, wisdom, vision, and fortitude to earnestly labor in his vineyard.
 - *We pray particularly for* our pastor **Rev. Jonathan J. Brown** and for **our church board**.
 - *We pray also for* **our Evangelical Congregational Church leadership**: our bishop **Randy Sizemore**, executive director **Kevin Henry**, and district field director **Keith Miller**; the **Global Ministries Community** under **Ted Rathman**; the **Kingdom Extension Community** under **Mike Snedeker**; the **Church Health Community** under **Gary Kuehner**; the **Missional Alignment Community** under **Bishop Randy Sizemore**; and the **Ministerial Development Community** under **Matthew Hill**.
- *We pray for our missionary partners* (such as **Dan Quigley** and others), that God would keep them safe and faithful, would focus their efforts on God's work, and would grant success in accordance with his holy will.
- *We pray for other churches and pastors in our community*, that God would keep all congregations united in one holy faith and devoted to the ardent service of one and the same kingdom and of its King, Jesus.
- *We pray for the salvation of our whole community and its maturation in Christian discipleship*, knowing that there is hope in Jesus for all people and for entire communities to reflect the righteous love of God.
- *We pray for an end to disease outbreaks*: COVID-19, mpox, cholera, dengue, diphtheria, anthrax, flu, RSV.
- *We pray for those suffering in the wake of disasters around the world*, that God would have mercy:
 - *We pray for* those afflicted by natural disasters such as famine; drought in Africa; wildfires; heat waves in the Philippines, India, and elsewhere; tornadoes in Nebraska, Iowa, and China; storms in Pakistan; flooding in Russia, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, Tanzania, Kenya, Oman, China, Mississippi; earthquakes in Taiwan and Indonesia; landslides in Indonesia, Congo, and Tanzania; volcanic eruptions in Indonesia.
 - *We pray for* those afflicted by accidents such as boat accidents in Mozambique, Djibouti, and the Central African Republic; helicopter accidents in the Philippines, Malaysia, and Colombia; bus/truck accidents in Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, Pakistan, and California; the race car crash in Sri Lanka; explosions in Italy, Cambodia, and Lebanon; fires in Turkey, the UAE, Hong Kong, and Brazil; the dam bursting in Russia.
- *We pray also for those victimized by violence and social ills, especially the Israel-Hamas war and Russian invasion of Ukraine*, that God would make his peace manifest to the injured, traumatized, and grieving.
 - *We pray additionally for* those afflicted by the Uyghur genocide in China; civil war in Syria, Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Myanmar, etc.; India-Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan, Sudan-South Sudan, and Armenia-Azerbaijan conflicts; insurgency in Egypt, Colombia, Chad, Cameroon, Congo, Iran, Iraq, the Maghreb, Nigeria, Niger, India, Peru, Libya, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Uganda, Mozambique, Pakistan, South Sudan, Turkey, and Indonesia; ethnic violence in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere; gang/cartel wars in Mexico, Ecuador, and Haiti; ambushes in South Sudan, Pakistan, the West Bank, and elsewhere; protest-related violence in Mexico, Georgia, the United States, and elsewhere; shootouts in North Carolina and elsewhere; mass shootings in Finland, Russia, Malaysia, Florida, and Tennessee; mass stabbings in Australia, Wales, and England; bombings in Syria, Ukraine, and Kenya; kidnappings; crises in Gaza and Haiti; vandalism and attacks on churches; the American opioid epidemic; human rights violations (e.g., abortion and human trafficking); the rising wave of antisemitism; and the refugee crisis.
- *We pray for* all who serve and protect us, including **civic leaders, police, firefighters, medical responders, and members of the military**: May God keep them safe, just, wise, sincere, humble, and accountable.
- *We pray for our nation and its government* at all levels and in all branches, that God would move our leaders to repent of unjust or unmerciful practices and laws; that God would crown them with wisdom, security, peace, and civility toward all; and that God would give them godly hearts to live and govern rightly.
- *We pray for the persecutors and maligners of the church around the world*:
 - *We pray for* the conversion of terrorists and other people of violence into disciples of the Prince of Peace.
 - *We pray for* the wisdom of God to be made manifest to skeptics and critics.
 - *We pray for* the Spirit's boldness to fill the hearts of all believers to witness to Jesus in life and in death.

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We pray for the families and friends of many who have entered their rest in the past year, including:*
 - For the family of **Darryl Imler** (Leroy Stoltzfus' nephew), who entered rest on April 1, 2023.
 - For the family of **Glenn Weber**, who entered rest on April 4, 2023.
 - For the family of **Clarence Jones** (Floyd Mast's uncle), who entered rest on April 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Linda Wonder** (Sharon Mast's stepmother), who entered rest on April 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **John Herr** (Abby Eberly's friend), who entered rest on April 29, 2023.
 - For the family of **Sherry Stoltzfus** (Esther's sister-in-law's mother), who entered rest on May 4, 2023.
 - For the family of **Jim Brubaker**, who entered rest on May 5, 2023.
 - For the family of **Clarence Bauman** (Joyce Good's brother), who entered rest on June 17, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ben Schweitzer** (Kim Sweigart's son-in-law's friend), who entered rest July 10, 2023.
 - For the family of **Mary Martin** (Abby Eberly's friend's sister), who entered rest on July 15, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ray Snader**, who entered rest on July 17, 2023.
 - For the family of **John Kendig** (Sharon Mast's brother-in-law), who entered rest on July 19, 2023.
 - For the family of **Mary Skiba** (Sally Arment's cousin), who entered rest on August 20, 2023.
 - For the family of **Ivan Zimmerman** (Ray Snader's brother-in-law), who entered rest on August 22, 2023.
 - For the family of **Della Bollinger** (Floyd Mast's aunt), who entered rest on August 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **Harley Steenhoek** (the Walkers' grandpa), who entered rest on September 2, 2023.
 - For the family of **Elsie Martin** (Jean Hess's great-aunt), who entered rest on September 8, 2023.
 - For the family of **Clarence Good** (Jean Hess's uncle), who entered rest on September 13, 2023.
 - For the family of **Luke Ringler** (Abby's son-in-law's brother), who entered rest on September 25, 2023.
 - For the family of **Pat Street** (Nancy Mountz's sister), who entered rest on September 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **Daniel Newswanger** (Mabel's husband), who entered rest on October 8, 2023.
 - For the family of **Joyce Martin** (Jean Hess's cousin), who entered rest on October 11, 2023.
 - For the family of **Shirley Riggins** (Deb Messner's mother), who entered rest on October 13, 2023.
 - For the family of **Titus Burkholder** (Leon Hess's cousin), who entered rest on October 16, 2023.
 - For the family of **Erwin Sensenig Jr.** (Sally Arment's brother), who entered rest on November 7, 2023.
 - For the family of **Henrietta Hoshauer**, who entered rest on November 18, 2023.
 - For the family of **Bob Schade** (Cindy Ruth's uncle), who entered rest on November 23, 2023.
 - For the family of **Harvey Sauder**, who entered rest on November 25, 2023.
 - For the family of **David Kulp**, who entered rest on November 27, 2023.
 - For the family of **Bill Sprecher** (Sharon Mast's uncle), who entered rest on December 4, 2023.
 - For the family of **April Shirk** (Joan Swayze's daughter), who entered rest on December 7, 2023.
 - For the family of **Evaleen Weinhold** (Joan Swayze's aunt), who entered rest on December 16, 2023.
 - For the family of **Larry Fisher** (Abby Eberly's cousin's husband), who entered rest December 29, 2023.
 - For the family of **Dot Yohn** (Shirley's daughter's mother-in-law), who entered rest on January 3, 2024.
 - For the family of **Don Mellinger**, who entered rest on January 6, 2024.
 - For the family of **Jace London** (Cindy Ruth's neighbor's great-grandson), who entered rest Jan. 19, 2024.
 - For the family of **Lori Zimmerman**, who entered rest on January 19, 2024.
 - For the family of **Eugene Martin** (Esther Stauffer's uncle), who entered rest on January 19, 2024.
 - For the family of **Donna Rhodes** (Cindy Ruth's sister-in-law), who entered rest on January 21, 2024.
 - For the family of **Noah Sauder** (Jean Hess's cousin), who entered rest on February 3, 2024.
 - For the family of **Miriam Burkholder** (Jean Hess's cousin), who entered rest on February 26, 2024.
 - For the family of **Renaldo Angeleni** (the Hesses' friend), who entered rest on February 27, 2024.
 - For the family of **Noah Wenger** (Esther Stauffer's uncle), who entered rest on February 28, 2024.
 - For the family of **Karen Winter** (Jeff Kohl's sister-in-law), who entered rest on April 1, 2024.
 - May the Lord give immeasurable peace, strength, and comfort to all who face loss and grief.

PRAYER GUIDE

- *We pray for all dementia sufferers* and for **their caretakers**, that God would lighten burdens, restore clarity to injured minds, and speak directly to hearts and souls with his comfort, his peace, and the light of grace.
- *We pray for all suffering from cancer* – (including Randy Vandill, Cindy Ebersole, Troy Frey, Lisa Mast, Sue Stoltzfus [Lee and Martha's daughter-in-law], Doris Snader, Betty Kennedy [Del Ream's niece-in-law], Barb King, Earl Martin [Miriam Rissler's brother-in-law], Brandy Rhodes [Pastor Jonathan's cousin], Gene Sensenig, Adrienne Hedges [Brenna Pammer's friend], Deana Bernardi [Floyd Mast's friend], Ray Boley [Joyce Good's friend], Matthew Lawrie [Sharon Mast's son's friend], Rev. Keith Miller, Rev. Marlin Lafferty, Rev. Don Wert, etc.) – that God shield them from pain, restore and comfort them, and bless their doctors.
- *We pray for the other assorted health concerns (and other needs) of:*
 - Earl and Pauline Good + John Good (Earl's brother) + David Good
 - Floyd Mast + Steven Mast (Floyd's son) + Cindy Bannon + Marilyn Wilson (Cindy's mother)
 - Barry Ream + Delores Jaxel + Clair Kohl + Jeff Kohl + Henry Kohl + Shawn and Candace Sweigart
 - Grayson Sweigart (Kim's grandson) + Cherri Snader + Jim Becker + Raymond Bannon
 - Dennis Burkholder + Wilmer Burkholder + Linda Burkholder + Mary Andrews
 - Barty Messner + Edna Binner + Ed Diem + John Grote (Esther Stauffer's friend)
 - Vera Kochel + Brandon Wilson + Floyd Heuyard + Betty Musser
 - Violet Stauffer + Paul Ford + Becky Wallace + Emma 'Tiny' Shirk
 - Jerry Felpel and Doris Getz + Dawn Acevedo (Cindy Hoffer's sister)
 - Josh Kendig (Sharon Mast's son) + Connie Dieter (Leon and Jean Hess's daughter)
 - Larsen Houck (Shirley Good's great-grandson) + Kayley Smith (the Hesses' granddaughter)
 - Ray Arment + Butch and Mike Skiba + Emily Sensenig + Jeannine Sensenig
 - Dennis Wanner (Deb Kimmel's brother) + Sharon Geib (Deb's sister)
 - Veanna Baxter + Julia Reed (Veanna's sister) + Miriam Rissler
 - Jeremy Kurman + Warren Weinhold + Jody Freeman
 - Jess Pennepacker + Charles Yingst + Ralph Mountz
 - Carl and Grace Nolt + Don Pickle + Carl Martin
 - Robert and Barbara Sparr + Rodger Whittaker
 - Elizabeth Zimmerman (John Eberly's sister)
 - Dorothy Long (Sharon Mast's boss's sister)
 - Shirley Buchanan + Alice Vidzicki
 - Madelynne Walker + Ben + Tim
 - Gloria Hoffman + Minerva Hufford
 - Troy Frey and both of his parents + Tory Lingg
 - Donna Sensenig + Larry Sensenig + Daryll Sensenig
 - Delores, Jeremiah, and Bobby Snader + Ben Doullin + Shirley Sweigart
 - Linda Talbot (Cindy Ruth's sister) + Tom Schwer (Sharon Mast's stepbrother)
 - Rebecca Lucas (the Walkers' family friend) + Rebecca Horst + Dillon Dewire
 - Ken Keen and Nancy Fox (Floyd Mast's friends) + Barb (Anita Boley's friend)
 - Ken Styer + Bret Hoffert + Jethro Hursh + Larry and Cookie White (the Hesses' friends)
 - Linda Sweitzer (Abby Eberly's friend) + Bob Buckwalter (Abby's friend's husband)
 - Kathryn Shirk (Jean Hess's aunt) + Sonya Shirey (Jean's friend) + Diane (Jean's daughter's co-worker)
- *We pray for other neighbors, friends, and believers in need*, that God would heal, provide, and comfort.
- *We pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit* upon our church, our community, our county, our nation, the Evangelical Congregational Church, and the church universal. *We pray for the whole church to be filled with a spiritual zeal for worship, evangelism, and discipleship. May the fires of revival fall!*
- *We praise God for all the prayers we've seen him answer and for his everlasting faithfulness!*